

# **Chicago Police Department's FY 2014 COPS COMMUNITY POLICING DEVELOPMENT MICROGRANT APPLICATION (COPS-CPD-2014-1)**

## **Gang School Safety Team (GSST) Program Model: Evaluation and Dissemination**

### **Project Description**

#### **1. Topic and Program Outcome Identification and Justification**

Year after year, Chicago experiences tragically high levels of youth-involved violence that is often associated with minor conflicts spiraling out of control, gang affiliations, and easy access to guns. The unacceptable consequences of this violence to families, communities and to the City itself have driven efforts by the Chicago Police Department (CPD), Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and other community partners to develop a truly innovative, collaborative and apparently effective method to prevent and reduce youth-involved violence – the Gang School Safety Team (GSST). GSST is a scalable and replicable targeted intervention strategy centered upon CPD gang enforcement Officers working with CPS personnel to intervene in emerging youth conflicts (typically identified through social media monitoring or school-based intel) to prevent those conflicts from escalating to acts of violence.

There is a tremendous body of anecdotal evidence of GSST effectiveness. GSST has been implemented over 3,400 times since March 2010, and has been publicly credited by CPD and CPS with double-digit reductions in student-involved shootings over the past three years – yet we have not had the resources needed to properly evaluate GSST methods and results or to systematically or broadly share the GSST community policing strategy with other jurisdictions experiencing high rates of youth-involved violence associated with gangs and guns.

Not that there already isn't some excitement about the promise of GSST. The GSST Commanding Officer, Sergeant Kenneth Boudreau, has been invited to discuss GSST in

Washington, D.C. at the June 25, 2014 COPS “Integrated School Resource Officer Safety Model and Training Curriculum” Law Enforcement Professional Focus Group. Several jurisdictions have requested and received GSST training (i.e. Dane County, Wisconsin Youth Violence Task Force; U.S. Attorney’s Office, Northwest District of Indiana, SRO Training) and GSST presentations have been requested by several professional associations (i.e. 2011 National Gang Crime Research Center Annual Conference; 2013 International Association of Chiefs of Police Annual Conference; Illinois Association of School Boards Annual Conference).

The CPD requests FY 2014 COPS CPD Microgrant funding to: conduct a rigorous process and outcome evaluation of this intervention to demonstrate its efficacy; to improve the model; and to document the steps necessary (including training and protocols for interventions) to allow other law enforcement organizations and their community partners across the country to replicate this promising model. This grant application responds to Microgrant topic I.b. "Implementing Cutting-Edge Strategies to Reduce Violence". The proposed GSST research will demonstrate the deterrent effect of proactive social emotional interventions by law enforcement and school personnel on the escalation of violence among at-risk youth and in positively resolving conflict among these young people.

The need for effective interventions into student conflicts is apparent. From 2009 through 2013, 266 juveniles aged 17 and younger were murdered in the city of Chicago. Of those, 227 or 85.3% were murdered on the City's South and West Sides. An additional 1,813 juveniles were shot during the same time period with 84.5% of those victims shot on Chicago's South and West Sides. As demonstrated by the above statistics, most of Chicago’s young people who are directly affected by violence live in the City’s most distressed neighborhoods, typically on the South and West Sides of the City where dropout and unemployment rates are disproportionately high.

These factors contribute to gang membership, low academic achievement, and involvement in other harmful behaviors, including narcotics sales, that places young people at a greater risk of violence. Nationwide, according to the CDC, homicide is by far the leading cause of death for African-Americans aged 15-24.

Changing trends in Chicago's streets gangs have also contributed to the youth violence problem. The City's conscious effort to close high-rise public housing over the past decade has led gangs previously located in housing projects to seek to establish themselves in new neighborhoods, many times where another gang has been already established. In addition, CPD's focus on eradicating the traditional hierarchy and span of control of street gangs has caused the splintering of gangs into factions often controlling no more than a few city blocks. This has created opportunities for juveniles, typically between the ages of 14 to 17, to establish more power within small gang factions than they could have achieved in the hierarchies of the previous gang structures. For example, CPD has identified over 200 factions of the Gangster Disciples within the City of Chicago, and many conflicts that arise within neighborhoods and in and around our schools can be attributed to these various factions of the same gang fighting amongst themselves. Additionally, according to an NIJ study on Chicago youth<sup>1</sup> that self-reported carrying concealed firearms, more than 90% had been victimized, more than 90% had witnessed violence, and almost three-quarters had a family member who had been shot (73%).

In many instances, violent incidents involving young people are a direct result of retaliation for minor conflicts that escalate into more violent and deadly encounters. In most of these incidents, the youth involved are members of or affiliated with street gangs.

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<sup>1</sup> NIJ Research in Brief: *Adolescents, Neighborhoods, and Violence: Recent Findings from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods*; September 2007.

Finally, CPD has also discovered that conflicts are increasingly generated from or organized and exacerbated by postings by young people on social media outlets. CPD estimates that social media postings are involved in over 70% of youth conflicts in Chicago.

In order to better address these trends, the City of Chicago began an intensive communication and collaboration effort with representatives from many City agencies (including Police, Schools, Parks, Public Housing, Public Health, and Family Services) to prevent youth conflicts from escalating and resulting in violence. This collaboration and communication strategy, designed to maximize use of existing City resources devoted or available to address the issue of youth violence, is a cornerstone of the City's youth violence prevention plan.

In this strategy, daily conference calls are conducted by the Mayor's Office with representatives from CPD's *Crime Prevention and Information Center* and the CPS Bureau of Safety and Security. The purpose of these daily calls is to identify and analyze any violent incidents, particularly shootings and homicides involving Chicago Public School students, and to develop and implement immediate interagency coordinated strategies to prevent retaliation.

In March 2010, and as a result of the City's youth violence reduction strategy, CPD created a Gang School Safety Team composed of experienced gang enforcement Officers and supervisors, to conduct direct, school-based interventions designed to prevent conflict escalation and retaliatory shootings. These teams are deployed in response to violent incidents involving Chicago Public School students, or after CPD receives intelligence about emerging conflicts.

GSST interventions combine elements of two evidence-based practices (the Boston Gun Project, and Chicago's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) offender notification forums) and are designed to prevent retaliatory violence, not to identify and arrest offenders. Both practices focus on those individuals who are most likely to be involved in firearm violence by bringing them into

contact with law enforcement officials at forums or meetings, where the officials stress the consequences to picking up a gun, or failing to resolve a crisis, and the choices that can be made to reduce the chances of being involved violence, either as a shooter or as a victim. In effect, the officials offer both warnings and a helping hand, with offers of support for an individual's efforts to seek out community services, or to stay in school, or to step back from gang activity.

OJJDP has included the Boston Gun Project as a "Promising" evidence-based program in their Model Programs Guide database of 200 evidence-based programs. And in a 2001 NIJ research report on the Boston Gun Project, investigators found that place-based or hotspot policing is effective at reducing crime, stating "*The resulting Ceasefire intervention is innovative and seems to have played an important part in reducing youth homicide in Boston.*"<sup>2</sup>

There is also research evidence that participation in PSN Offender Notification Forums can significantly lessen homicide rates "*The PSN program with the greatest effect on declining neighborhood level homicide was the Offender Notification Forums. In short, the greater the proportion of offenders who attend the Forums, the greater the decline in neighborhood levels of homicide. The reason for this large effect is explored in individual levels of re-offending and their opinion of law enforcement.*"<sup>3</sup>

GSST interventions involve school administrators, probation officers when appropriate, and GSST Officers meeting with all students potentially involved in the crisis. GSST Officers discuss the causes of the conflict with the students, the impact that gang membership has on them, their families and friends, and the choices they have to avoid future violence. The students “get” that they can’t “get over” on street-sophisticated and experienced GSST Officers – and that

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<sup>2</sup> Kennedy, D, Anthony Braga, and Anne Piehl (2001): *Reducing Gun Violence: The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Papachristos, A, Tracey Meares, and Jeffrey Fagan (2009): *Homicide and Gun Violence in Chicago: Evaluation and Summary of the Project Safe Neighborhoods Program*, p. 4.

these Officers genuinely care about them. The GSST Officers literally thrive on the importance of their work and their ability to make a difference in the lives of these young people.

Since the beginning of this initiative, the Gang School Safety Team has conducted 3,434 interventions. During each intervention, the Gang School Safety Team members take the following steps: assess the students' emotional disposition from the conflict; obtain information from the students about the event and the history of conflict between the parties; assess and inquire about the students' individual safety in relation to the conflict as well as the potential for retaliation; encourage the students to avoid any participation in retaliation or retaliatory activities; encourage the students to notify school personnel, SROs, or their probation officer if they hear new information that wasn't available or discussed during the intervention; provide a unified support system for the students to show that their safety is the overall goal; encourage the students to avoid contact with any gang members as well as groups or people named in the incident or conflict; conduct a basic needs assessment to ensure the youth are not homeless or without food, and that they have a personal safety plan that includes a safe passage to school; and GSST Officers often follow-up with students and their parents and/or guardians and make appropriate referrals for needed social services.

## **2. Program Goals**

Under this proposal, the Chicago Police Department will achieve the following program goals: 1) Developing knowledge by better understanding and improving the impact of the GSST strategy; 2) Increasing awareness by disseminating GSST research to other law enforcement organizations and their community partners around the country; and 3) Increasing practice and institutionalizing practice by developing and disseminating a GSST implementation manual<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> A review of GSST data collection and analysis conducted by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago included as one of its key findings that "GSST should consider developing or formalizing educational materials on program

### **3. Strategy to Achieve Program Outcomes and Goals**

Despite anecdotal evidence of GSST success, a rigorous and objective evaluation of the GSST strategy is needed to both demonstrate the program's success and to create a continuous quality improvement process to maximize the strategy's impact on youth violence, particularly retaliatory violence. In addition, in order to be more readily replicable by other law enforcement organizations, a manual describing GSST philosophy, Officer selection and training, and operational procedures required to successfully implement the initiative must be developed. CPD will collaborate with a research partner to 1) conduct a GSST process and outcome evaluation and 2) to develop a GSST manual to aid in replication. To accomplish the second goal, the research partner will embed a researcher within GSST to participate in all aspects of interventions to accurately document the work in order to develop the curriculum needed for GSST to be scaled as needed and replicated. Additional details regarding the evaluation process and methodology follow in section 6.

### **4. Capacity and Experience**

CPD, fully supported by the City of Chicago, has implemented one of the most comprehensive community policing strategies in the country for almost two decades, a strategy built on the premise that active partnerships with the community (residents, businesses, faith institutions, schools, not-for-profits, and social services providers) are essential to preventing and reducing crime. The community policing philosophy and practice that underlies everything that we do has contributed to CPD's successful management of and compliance with many Department of Justice grants (i.e. multiple COPS Hiring and Secure Our Schools grants; NIJ

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processes, services and goals...in order to ultimately increase effective collaborations." The report also noted the "GSST should consider formalizing the officer training protocol...to document the necessary tools for GSST officers, which could then be used to expand or replicate the project model."

Hot-Spots Policing Research, and Predictive Policing Research and Implementation) without significant audit findings or lapsed funds, and the CPD Project Team has considerable experience and expertise in overcoming the sorts of bureaucratic obstacles that can interfere with achieving grant objectives.

Our GSST research partner, the Crime Lab at the University of Chicago ([www.crimelab.uchicago.edu](http://www.crimelab.uchicago.edu)) is a national leader and resource in determining "what works", especially on the topics of violence prevention and at-risk juveniles policy and practice.

CPD has a well-established and well-led GSST team of experienced gang enforcement Officers carefully selected to participate in the program. This established GSST capacity has conducted 3,434 interventions, grown from nine Officers and one Sergeant serving the South Side to 15 Officers and two Sergeants serving the South and West Sides, and is scheduled to expand through creation of a separate team of 16 sworn Officers dedicated 24/7/365 to social media monitoring. GSST is led by the Gang Enforcement Commander who reports to the Chief of CPD's Bureau of Organized Crime; both are highly supportive of the current GSST proposal.

## **5. Management and Implementation Plan**

The GSST project will be managed by a Project Leadership Team that will meet at least monthly during the 90 days after the award is received, and no less often than quarterly thereafter through the two-year program period. Each will assign needed staff to attend the meetings. For instance, the Administrative Lead will involve: a Grants Research Specialist to monitor progress and comply with COPS reporting requirements; Finance Division staff to manage CPD's business and financial relationship with the Crime Lab; and CPD Research and Development staff to ensure Crime Lab research is conducted consistent with Human Subjects requirements, etc. Resumes' are attached for the GSST Project Team leaders: the operational lead (the GSST



Commanding Officer), the Principal Investigator (the University of Chicago Crime Lab's Director of Research), and the administrative lead (the CPD Director of Grants Management).

The Project Team will collectively determine evaluation methodology and facilitate researcher participation in interventions and access to Department data related to the individuals served by the GSST. CPD anticipates: project research will begin within 90 days of award and continue for 12 months; throughout the research period, the Research Partner will provide immediate and frequent observations and determinations in writing to the Project Team to assist in achieving the Project's continuous quality improvement goal; and the Research Partner will present 1) a draft GSST manual to the Team 90 days before the grant ends, and 2) a draft final report to the Team 30 days before the grant ends.

CPD will coordinate GSST manual dissemination with the COPS Office.

## **6. Evaluation Plan/Effectiveness of Program**

Currently, each GSST intervention is recorded in a detailed report prepared by the responding Officer that reflects a full accounting of the intervention including: time, date, and location of the intervention; names of all youth and officials (e.g. school, police and probation personnel) present during the intervention; the minor's relationship to the shooting or assault victim(s); gang affiliations of the students and their associates; student perceptions of safety before and after the conflict event; an assessment of each students' thoughts in regards to retaliatory behavior; and a summary of the risk at the time of the intervention to either participate in or become a victim of retaliatory violence. The GSST maintains these reports and statistical data and employs interventions based on the analysis of this information. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these interventions have prevented retaliatory shootings and escalation of conflicts.

The Principal Investigator (PI) will be assigned to work with GSST partners to design and improve data collection methods, and to collect, analyze and report on data in order to improve GSST outcomes. GSST impact on youth involved in interventions will be measured quantitatively by identifying a valid comparison group. The GSST operates in areas of the City that account for the majority of violence in the City of Chicago with many “very high-risk” youth (so identified by an objective and formal CPS evaluation of student risk) who attend CPS schools. The PI will compare GSST outcomes with the outcomes of *very high risk* youth involved in similar crises who attend CPS schools in other areas of the city which have similar demographics to areas served by GSST. The PI will also evaluate any “spillover” effect on other students within the schools where the Gang School Safety Team is active.

CPD will assist the PI in determining the best and most efficient GSST research techniques. For instance, some GSST interventions involve students from schools not in areas served by GSST; the PI may use those out-of-area student outcomes in a matched-group design. The PI may also want to use CPD's geo-coded crime event-level data (including age of victims and offenders) to conduct a difference-in-differences analysis to compare outcomes for juveniles served by the program (possibly limited to the specific communities around the schools most served) with adult data (another “difference” would be added to the analysis to take into account the possibility that the younger and older groups vary in some systematic way with respect to outcomes). The research partner may also decide to include pre- and post- data for juveniles and adults in areas just across the boundary from areas served by GSST as an additional control.

Conclusion: Everyone involved in GSST in Chicago knows that it works, and appreciates this opportunity to fund a proper GSST evaluation to prove that it works, and to improve its impact upon preventable youth-involved violence in Chicago as well as in other jurisdictions.